1.0 Introduction

Section 3039 of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) required the Secretary of Transportation, in coordination with the Secretary of the Interior, to "undertake a comprehensive study of alternative transportation needs in national parks and related Federal Lands." The results of the Federal Lands Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) Study identified significant transit needs at sites managed by the NPS, the BLM, and the USFWS. Two hundred seven (207) sites were evaluated in the study; 85 with extensive field visits and 122 with telephone calls or brief visits.

1.1 ATS Goals

Site managers often view transit system implementation as a way to address some of the challenges created by high visitation levels and increased levels of automobile traffic. Implementing transit on federally-managed lands can help achieve the following goals:

Entrance to Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado

- **Relieve Traffic Congestion and Parking Shortages –** Sites such as the Grand Canyon, the Great Smoky Mountains and popular beach areas can accommodate more visitors but not more vehicular traffic. By providing transit services, fewer vehicles could transport a greater number of visitors to destinations within Federal sites and private vehicle parking spaces would be reduced.

- **Enhance Visitor Mobility and Accessibility –** Travel to, and within, Federal sites is primarily accomplished with private automobiles. Visitation to the site itself, or certain attractions within the site, can be restricted due to lack of roadway and parking capacity. Travel can be made much easier, and congestion reduced, by implementing trams or shuttle bus service. This enhances the visitor's experience by permitting them to enjoy their site experience rather than concentrating on driving or finding scarce parking spaces. Additionally, transit can provide visitors with disabilities improved access to many sites.

- **Preserve Sensitive Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources –** Parking lot capacities often do not meet parking needs, encouraging visitors to park on roadway shoulders and in other inappropriate locations, damaging the resources. Oftentimes, expanding the parking areas is incompatible with resource preservation needs. Transit can reduce parking demands in these areas and limit the amount of foot traffic in an area or locations where foot traffic is allowed.

- **Reduce Pollution –** Existing transit vehicle fleets often consist of old equipment with high particulate and noxious gas output. A dedicated source of funding would permit these vehicles to be replaced by new clean fuel technologies whenever possible. New

standard fuel vehicles, which have much lower emissions than the older vehicles, would be purchased where clean fuel technologies were impractical. Air pollution could also be reduced through transit implementation by decreasing the total number of vehicles accessing the sites. New transit vehicles, which operate much more quietly than older vehicles, would limit noise pollution.

- **Provide Improved Interpretation, Education, and Visitor Information Services –** Site managers identified opportunities to use transit to educate visitors about the environmental sensitivity of natural sites. At cultural and historical sites, transit can enhance the ability of site personnel to present past events in a logical, sequential manner.

- **Improve Recreational and Economic Opportunities –** Many sites are participating in regional initiatives to enhance recreational activities that extend beyond site boundaries, including hiking, bicycling and water-oriented recreation. Transit services can be used to transport people and their equipment to drop-off and pick-up points, thereby increasing the accessibility of recreational activities. Increasing accessibility through transit can increase the site visitation levels, resulting in additional economic revenues in the local communities through increased use of hotels, restaurants, and other visitor-oriented services.

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, Virginia

1.2 Barriers to Success

This study identified a number of the barriers to successful implementation of transit systems. The following are some of these barriers:

- **Lack of a Dedicated Funding Source for Developing, Implementing, and Operating and Maintaining Transit Systems –** The FHWA administers the Federal Lands Highway Program (FLHP) that provides funding exclusively for the Federal Lands Management Agencies (FLMA). The FLHP primarily funds roadway and bridge projects, although three categories of FLHP funds may be used for transit projects: the Park Roads and Parkways Program, the Forest Highway Program and the Indian Reservation Roads program. When

Boat Concession at
Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Georgia

FLHP funds are used for transit projects, however, there are fewer funds available for roadway and bridge projects. There is currently a gap between the funds needed by the FLMAs to maintain their roads and bridges in current conditions and the funds made available through the FLHP. Therefore when FLHP funds are used for transit projects rather than roadway and bridge projects, this gap increases. Furthermore, public law prohibits the use of FLHP Refuge Roads Program funds for transit, and the BLM does not have a dedicated source of funding for transit.

In the case of other programs administered by the FHWA and the FTA, the vast majority of funding is distributed to State and local transportation authorities. For transit projects that primarily benefit FLMAs to receive these funds, these projects have to be sponsored by State and local transportation authorities, programmed through the statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes, and deemed a higher priority than other State or metropolitan transportation projects. Although this approach has worked in some instances, the demands by State and local transportation authorities currently exceed available funding. Therefore, these programs cannot be considered as significant, stable sources of funds for supporting transit projects that primarily benefit the FLMAs.

- **Difficulty in Selecting Appropriate Equipment –** In general, the FLMAs do not have extensive expertise in the various transit technologies. Therefore, it is difficult for them to select the most appropriate technologies to be implemented for their specific needs.

- **Lack of Support for Transit Systems by Certain Gateway Communities –** Resistance to transit implementation has come from some gateway communities who fear that it is the first step in restricting or banning automobiles from the site causing reduced visitation and economic hardship for local residents. The FLMAs have indicated that automobile traffic will only be restricted when alternative transportation systems are provided to accommodate those visitors.

- **Inadequate Marketing and Public Information –** In some instances where optional transit services exist at a site, there should be additional marketing and public information efforts to increase public awareness of the transit services.

- **Technical Challenges –** The establishment of transit systems requires expertise in public transportation service planning, design, implementation, operations and maintenance. Most FLMA sites are unfamiliar with this type of project implementation and require significant assistance from transit experts.

Trolley, Adams National Historic Site, Massachusetts